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THE SIBERIAN IRIS



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By

The Society For Siberian Irises

October 1964

C O N T E N T S

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MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS

All members of this Society residing in the United States and Canada shall be members of the American Iris Society. Dues shall be \$1.00 per year.

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SOCIETY FOR SIBERIAN IRISES

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THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE
Peg Edwards

We have nothing startling or spectacular to tell you about this time. Instead I'll present you with a grab-bag of little things - but some of them may turn out rather important in time.

The Executive Committee has been investigating ways to improve our financial status. Annual dues just barely cover the cost of putting out The Siberian Iris; right now we are 'in hock' for part of the cost of the Judging Handbook (this of course will eventually be cleared off with the sale of copies to non-members); and it is difficult to attempt to do very much without some cash reserve. We don't want to ask for an increase in dues. So the question is, what to do? One thing we are trying is, selling ads in The Siberian Iris. Unfortunately these will not serve for the purpose of introducing new varieties, as far as the American Iris Society Awards system goes. However, it does seem that The Siberian Iris is the most logical place for growers of Siberians to bring their stock to the attention of their potential customers. If Society for Siberian Iris members don't buy who will? If you sell Siberians, tell our readers. If you buy them, consider our advertisers. (And, in the best Madison Avenue Style - when you send for a catalog, say you saw the ad HERE!) A possibility we are considering is that of obtaining the whole stock - preferably by donation of the originator - of a fine seedling and selling it to the members for the benefit of the Society for Siberian Irises. But this requires quite a bit of thought. There is also the possibility of having a mail-order auction. But here, again, there is a lot of work involved, and we can't know till we try it whether it would be worth the effort. We will keep you posted. And if you have any suggestions, do please send them to us.

Mrs. J. W. Judd has made a very sensible suggestion which we will use from here out; the officer's and committee chairman's addresses will appear with their names at the front of each issue. Mrs. Judd mentioned in the same letter that our Judging Handbook was the basis of the program for a meeting of the Chattanooga Iris Society. Why not suggest the same to your local group? And, of course, persuade the Program Chairman that every member should own a copy. At least every judge.

We are inaugurating a letters-to-the-editor column with this issue. We have had a few questions, and the Question Box will continue; but this is to be a sort of forum where members can express their opinions. Bryce Phenix starts us off with a letter about prices of new introductions. By the way, don't miss his article on Test and Display Gardens. Mr. Abercrombie has some comments on the results of his article in the last issue. And it may be that between my writing this and its seeing print, some others will turn up.

I hope you all had a better season than I did this spring. Last summer I replanted my whole display bed, and as soon as I had the last plant in place (or it seemed that way) a drought set in. Result - out of over 200 divisions only seven bloomed. Established plants in my mixed border bloomed nicely however, in spite of the shortage of water. I shall be interested to see how they do next year. We have been

having another bad drought this year. Total rainfall in August was .3 inch. There have been no restrictions on use of the hose but with everyone running water most of the day, nobody gets very much. Besides - I am wondering if the chlorinated water might not actually have the effect of locking up some of the chemicals needed by the plants. We had one good thunderstorm in early September and the difference in the plants between hose-watering and the natural rainfall was easily apparent. Is there an agricultural chemist in the house?

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From Towne Abercrombie: (Response to an article in The Siberian Iris)

"You will I am sure be interested in the response to the article I wrote...regarding the securing of the new varieties of Siberians. Bluntly, the response was nil. I had sincerely hoped that some of the hybridizers would want to have their new introductions made available to the buyers but apparently they want to sit on them, so to speak, and not make them available to the public. I wrote to several of the growers mentioned in you list in the last issue and all seem to be having just as hard a time as I am in securing new varieties. Typical would be this from Melrose Gardens, Stockton, California, "We do not have enough stock of Siberian irises to build up a stock." Or an excerpt from a letter from Mrs. Brown, Brown's Iris Gardens, Lynnwood, Washington, "I would dearly love to see some of the newer introductions. Let us know what you will introduce...."

"I have been able to secure seven different varieties from the Southern Meadows Gardens, Centralia, Illinois, and three or four from Mrs. Brown, thus giving me a total of 30 different varieties, but none of them are the newer introductions, and for the most part I will not be able to sell very many for a year or so as I will need to build up stock. Some growers, such as we are, want plants at wholesale just as I do but like Melrose Gardens they are finding it difficult to find a source. I fear that interest in the Siberians will wane unless something new can be added. One cannot forever stress the beauty of the old favorites when there are better varieties available somewhere (but where?)

* * * * *

MEMBERSHIP AND 1965 DUES

With each copy of this issue is an Application For Membership form--why not give it to a friend and urge him or her to join our society? We need new members, should encourage other AIS members to join the section of AIS and build up our membership. Send new membership application blanks and YOUR DUES FOR 1965 to:

Mrs. John Withers, Secretary
Society for Siberian Irises
Route 1, Box A-10
Mandan, North Dakota

A STUDY OF TEST AND DISPLAY GARDENS - Part I
Bryce Phenis

Recently I was told that the most controversial subject among AIS members at this time is the matter of Test Gardens; it seems that some people have found this an easy way to make enemies. It is with some hesitation that I present the results of my study of both Test and Display Gardens. I would like to stir up some discussion and interest in the subject, but, I hope, no enemies.

The purpose of the investigation was to learn about the operation of Test and Display Gardens and how they might be adapted efficiently to the Siberians. Thus, I considered the difficulties as well as the successes.

My research was done with the Test and Display Gardens of the Median and Spuria Iris Societies. A six-point questionnaire was sent to all members of these two societies maintaining either type of garden. Each person questioned was asked to explain any difficulties encountered, the cost of operation and sources of funds, ways in which the operation of the garden could be improved, what they believed to be the reasons for success or failure, and whether the garden had created interest among people other than members of the sponsoring society.

In this first article I shall only present factual matters obtained from the answers to the questionnaire, as a basis for consideration and discussion. In a later report I will present my own conclusions and suggestions.

One respondent provided the information that she had encountered no problems, but then qualified this by adding that she had only been operating her display garden for one season. Judging by the replies the difficulties that can be and are encountered are many.

One problem often mentioned is that of getting judges and other people to come to see the garden when it is in good bloom. This has been met by some by extensive advertising in Regional publications and through local news media; this was done without cost to the Society. Needless to say, the Society's own publication gives coverage among members.

A troublesome and major difficulty for a majority of the people contacted was finding time to care properly for the garden. One solution reported by several people was that of obtaining help from other people; one Median Display Garden is cared for not only by the owner but also by another Median fan and two Aril buffs. This lightening of the work load has turned this garden into a very efficient operation and has made for a better Display Garden.

The acquisition of plants through purchase, trade or as guest planting, the last as introduced as well as seedling plants, seems to present some problems. Then, the disposal of guest plants after two or three years creates further problems involving a great deal of

correspondence. The first problem has been met by the Median Iris Society, which is now sponsoring an exchange of plants among the Display Garden managers. By this method a wider selection of varieties will be seen throughout the country. It is my understanding that even guest plants are distributed, with the permission of the originator, among the several gardens. Another manager of a display garden solved this problem by selecting each year four or five hybridizers, sending each a sum of money ranging from ten to twenty-five dollars, explaining her status and asking these hybridizers to send her whatever they most wish to have seen. She has found this approach most effective.

An occasional report of theft turned up in the course of this study, although it didn't seem to be a widespread problem. Reasonable care in protecting guest plants should prevent this trouble.

One complaint that deserves careful consideration was voiced by one member when he said that the various societies expect people to present good, well-cared-for gardens and accept the responsibilities of running the garden, but fail to provide follow-through and help by the society. It would seem right that in all possible ways, the society provide assistance to the gardener.

The cost of operating the gardens and obtaining plants has, in the case of the Display Gardens, been met by the members operating them. Thus in some ways the Display Gardens of the Median and Spuria Societies can be considered as glorified private gardens, open to visitors and centrally located. Perhaps if the Sections could provide awards or other methods of citing outstanding performance of seedlings and named varieties, display of plants in these gardens would have greater meaning. In the case of Test Gardens some such methods must be applied.

Most respondents described the operation of the present system as adequate, with only a few suggestions for improvement. The major request was for more and better publicity. One made the suggestion that the Society buy several new introductions each year and distribute the increase, thus cutting down the cost to the private grower. Others voiced the wish that hybridizers would send seedlings without having to be asked, and then after two or three years send instructions about disposal of plants. An overwhelming majority would appreciate help in weeding and general garden care.

Streamlining the garden system was the aim of one proposal: 'Let the manager sell surplus plants locally and turn the funds back to the hybridizer, rather than sending the plants back'.

Everyone who replied thought his garden had been a success, though in varying degrees. It was noted that often, visiting a Display Garden or Test Garden was the visitor's introduction to Medians, whereupon some fell in love with them. At one garden a Judges' Training session is conducted each year to educate AIS judges concerning Medians. In this area this session has become very popular and widely attended. Harry Kuesel provided the reason for success: "Visitors liked bloom." A western grower stated that interest in irises in the area had greatly increased and has made many friendships among fanciers. A manager

reported great success among Median growers but little interest among Tall Bearded fanciers. One person reported, with pride, that many HC awards had been given to guest seedlings. The Denver Botanic Gardens reports that the success of other plant displays depend on the irises, the largest drawing card for the garden.

The words of one fancier about the success of his garden can be applied to the success or failure of the whole system: "It is a success because I spend time and money to make it so."

All said that interest had been aroused outside of their own Section, but that the amount of publicity determined the degree of success and interest.

Charlotte Gantz, in her entertaining letter, wrote about the four questions she asked herself before taking on the job of operating a Display Garden. Since I think it might be well for us to ask ourselves these same questions, I present them here:

1. Had I space for a Display Garden and could I afford the extra time to care for it?
2. Were the soil here and the climate good enough; would my care be sufficient to justify accepting guest plants?
3. Was I willing to publicize it sufficiently to justify maintaining the garden:
 - a. with stories in my local paper?
 - b. sending an up-to-date list of plants to be seen to all members of the Delaware Valley Iris Society and to other nearby iris growers and judges and an additional reminder to them each spring?
 - c. with stories for the Medianite and our Regional Bulletin?
4. By doing all this could I get people to look at the Garden?

Needless to say the application of these questions would need some changes to apply to this Society, but the general ideas are true for both a member and a Society. Charlotte felt that a 'yes' answer was necessary for each question.

Albert Ellis commented that a formal landscaped garden is the best setting, inasmuch as it attracts more attention to the irises. He also noted that this year he found interest high, with people coming several hundred miles to see his garden.

Many glowing reports have reached me telling what a wonderful Test Garden is being maintained in Region 18. Many of the people who replied, having traveled through much of the country visiting different gardens, have come to the conclusion that Mr. Minnick had organized the best Test Garden they have seen. All seedlings are grown under a code number; all get the best care; and these two factors, coupled with a central location, have created great interest and a most effective garden.

I hope that this summary of information will provide a basis for discussion and that we may be able to formulate an efficient system for our Society shortly. In my next report, along with my own suggestions,

I shall have the reactions of several Siberian hybridizers.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the many growers who took time out from their busy bloom season and their travels to reply to my questionnaire. Also to Peg Edwards for her words of encouragement and advice.

(Editor's note: Mr. Phenis would appreciate hearing from anyone who is hybridizing Siberians, not later than December 1, 1964, as an aid in preparing the second part of this article. It is to the advantage of the hybridizers themselves, and the Society as a whole, to assemble this information, as these articles and the comments of our readers will be the basis of whatever decision the Board will take about establishing Display Gardens. Please write to: Mr. Bryce Phenis
638 Wister Avenue
Chico, California

Our thanks to the people who have cooperated so far, and, in advance, to those who do so in the next months.)

* * * * *

REGISTRATIONS AND INTRODUCTIONS

This year the April Bulletin carried 19 registrations of Siberian irises. This is the greatest number in many years, and it is, I am sure, a source of pleasure to all of us. In 1960, the year the Society began to be organized, only two Siberians were registered. I think we can take a little of the credit for this increase, as by our existence we have made it known to hybridizers that there is a market for their introductions. But registration is not enough. Our hybridizers must feel that it is worth while for them to go to the further trouble of introducing, or having some commercial garden introduce for them, the seedlings they register. Because what good is a seedling to our non-hybridizer members if they can't buy it for their gardens? Perhaps if the hybridizers bear this in mind, next year will see as many names in the Introductions List as in the Registrations List.

One of the most interesting things about last year's registrations is the range of color. We are being presented with more than the old white-blue-violet range. One could understand the wide range of Mr. Kitton's seedlings as he is working in the 40 chromosome group which provides yellow to blend with the old standard hues. But breeders in this country are also getting new colors: gray, pink, greenish yellow, gold - granted these are not the color of the whole flower. But they are largely new colors for any part of a Sibirica of the common type. They represent more steps to our goal of as wide a range of color as the Tall Bearded.

* * *

REGISTRATIONS OF SIBERIAN IRISES, 1963

- BICKLEY CAPE (Kitton, 1963) 36", M, B 1. S. bright blue, F. bright blue, white veining. Blue Cape x Sibirica subsection hybrid seedling.
- CANFORD (Kitton, 1963) 36" M, B 3. S., light blue, F. dark blue. Bluecape x Bluecape.
- CAPE DAZZLE (Kitton, 1963) 30", L, Y 2 V. Yellow with violet reticulations. From two Sibirica subsection seedlings.
- COPPER ELF (Kitton, 1963) 24". L 0 5. Suffused copper on pale base, self. From two Sibirica hybrid seedlings.
- COURT VIOLET (Kitton, 1963) 36", L, V 1 D. S., violet purple, F. violet purple, white lines in throat. From two Sibirica hybrid seedlings.
- HAZEL'S CHOICE (Spofford, 1963) Sdlg DS-006. 32", EM, B 1. Light gray-blue, small white blaze, blue-white style arms. Parentage unknown.
- IVORY MOONLIGHT (Spofford, 1963) Sdlg DS-005. 22", EM, W 1 Y. White self, greenish-yellow hafts, green glow at heart. Parentage unknown.
- JIMMY'S GEN (Kitton, 1963) 36", M, B 1 V. Magenta-blue self. Bluecape x Eric the Red.
- JORETTA (Grace Carlson 1963) Sdlg. 5-57-2. 40", M, B 1 D. Dark blue self, wide segments, Parentage unknown. Ex. Cert. 1959.
- LOOKS MOHRISH (Spofford, 1963) Sdlg. DS-004. 27", E, W 4. S. gray white, F. pale pink, gold hafts, violet midrib on self-colored styles. Parentage unknown.
- MOONSCAPE (Kitton, 1963) 42", L, Y 5 B. Blue gray on yellow base, self. From two Sibirica subsection hybrid seedlings.
- NELLIE E. (McGarvey, 1963) Sdlg. 63-3-2-2. 40", ML, B 1. Blue self. (Gatineau x Caesar's Brother) x sib to pod parent.
- OYSTER BIRD (Kitton, 1963) 24", 1, Y0 4 W S. apricot, F. oyster white shaded apricot in hafts. From two Sibirica subsection hybrid sdlg.
- PIROUETTE (Cassebeer, 1963) Sdlg. 824. 32", ML, B 3. S. pale blue, F. medium blue. Parentage unknown.
- PURPLE CLOAK (Hutchison, 1963) Sdlg X-10. 36", M, B 3 V. S. purple blue, F. deep purple blue. Ellesmere x Bluemere. HC 1962.
- SNOW FLARE (Carlson, 1963) Sdlg. S-57-1. 40", M, W 1. Snowy white, slight yellow on hafts. Snowy Egret x unknown.
- VIOLETMERE (Hutchison, 1963) Sdlg. X-11. 42", L, V 1. Violet self, paler blue style arms. Purplemere x Bluemere. HC 1962.

WHITE NET (Kitton, 1963) 30", L, W 2 D. Off white with blue reticulations, self. From two Sibirica subsection hybrid seedlings.

YELLOW COURT (Kitton, 1963) 30", L, Y 1. Primrose self, slight striations in hafts. From two Sibirica subsection hybrid seedlings.

INTRODUCTIONS:

CARRIE LEE (Wiswell, R. 1962) Fairmount 1963.

A word about registered seedlings and their introduction: Until a seedling has been formally introduced to commerce it is not eligible for awards beyond HC. It is no use simply registering it and letting it go at that. If you can't find someone willing to introduce it for you then it is up to you to do it yourself if you want your pride and joy to win an HM or higher award.

How can you introduce your pride and joy? Unless you are a commercial grower you are hardly likely to be in a position to send out a catalog. But you could, perhaps, send out a printed (or mimeographed) list of your introductions to the AIS mailing list. Still that could run to quite a postage bill. Probably the most practical method for the amateur is to place an ad in the AIS Bulletin. You can buy a Display Ad for as little as \$9 for a single issue, which satisfies the requirements.

Having advertised by one of the three approved methods, you must then send a copy of the listing to the Recorder - Mrs. Walter Colquitt. You will find all the information needed on page 120 of the July Bulletin, #174. Naturally in your ad you will have mentioned the price and your address. With luck you will get a few orders. Don't just run out into the garden and dig up some divisions! If you are going to ship plants interstate be sure to have a U. S. or State Agricultural Inspection officer inspect your garden and obtain from him a supply of stickers to place on the outside of any package you mail out-of-state.

Don't sell more than half your stock in any one year. Otherwise you might be up the creek if you had more orders the next year.

A lot of trouble? More expense than you can get back in sales? Maybe. But if your pride and joy should win an Honorable Mention, it would be worth all the trouble.

* * * *

THAT TOUCH OF SIBIRICA
Mildred Johnson

It is always difficult to wait the first bloom of the Siberian irises in my own garden; and the great pleasure of visiting other Utah gardens which are boasting Siberian plantings is heartwarming.

Spring was undecided in our area this year - too much new help in the weather department "upstairs", I would presume. It was a delightfully wet season for us, however, and seemed to please the Siberians from here to Logan, Utah - about 75 miles north of Salt Lake.

As a new judge (with my askeric removed in the Bulletin) now, garden judging is a welcome addition to my iris activities and as the proverbially new broom, I made a "clean sweep", taking in a garden tour with the Rainbow Iris Society of Ogden, judging at the Cache Valley show and visiting area gardens, and participating in the Utah Iris Society show as well as romping from iris "patch " to iris "patch". It was interesting to see a clump of Siberians here and there and made me feel that my constant reminders to these iris lovers was paying off nicely. Bion Tolman grew a clump of Siberians so tall I got to see the flower from below (I declare, his new soil full of fertilizer and loving care paid off in results both in his TB plantings and Siberians). He used his dark Siberians as accents on the steps throughout the plantings and the airy flowers and billowy foliage filled the bill just right.

Everyone who sees me these days remarks something like, "Come and see the Siberian iris I put in this year", or "Wait till you see that start of Siberian you gave me", or "What will you take for a start of WHITE SWIRL?"...and on and on. It occurs to me that Utah soil is mightily good for that touch of Sibirica we love.

Erratic weather gave us a bad time for a while in Salt Lake, and the show originally planned for the 23rd of May came off June 7th.

By the time we finally got the show going, COOL SPRING (the start I brought back from the Denver Convention) had put out a single bloom which was immediately preserved in Silica Gel and placed in an arrangement with pussy willows...bringing me a blue ribbon for same. Later many flowers bloomed on four stalks (pretty good for a first-year clump, I thought) and each was duly preserved and is now waiting a place to go in an arrangement. The pale blue of this flower pleases me (blue of this shade being new to my plantings of Siberians.)

Late last fall Tell gave me a small piece of the new introduction, JORETTA, which multiplied nicely, but did not bloom. A newly-set MANDY MORSE is now a large clump, and should bloom next year too. Guesting the Siberians is fun.

My three-year clump of WHITE SWIRL did itself proud, producing many blooms, and setting a pod. I tried pollen of it on everything blooming,

but nothing took. The different form of this flower endears itself to me.

While in Logan the judges went to dinner with Art Holmgren, head of the Botany Department at USU, and later went to his new home and garden, both of which were "fabulous". His array of new-to-us plants included a scrumptuous clump of Siberian irises with blue-purple standards with white striped falls which brought oohs and aahs from me. How I did rave! - he said the plant was from a very old planting at his father's, and proceeded to dig a portion of it, bag it in plastic and send it with me. I must say the others in the party deviled me all the way home, but I stuck to my guns! Got home with the clump intact, and hope for bloom next spring. How lucky can you be! I've found a good piece, dirt intact, pays dividends in first-year bloom so am always most appreciative when receiving such a gift. I felt a little stingy, but promised each one in the group a piece when it was large enough for division. My next project is to find its name.

Crazy ole ERIC THE RED simply would not bloom with the usual number of falls this year. Of the six blooms out, five of them carried four falls and I began to like the symmetry of the look before it finished blooming. I guess ERIC just overdid this year; since none of the others behaved so differently, I can not account for the number of parts.

It was a balmy June morning when SILVER TIP bloomed (on the north side of the house), and with its white style arms against the deep blue falls it did show well. KINGFISHER, a nice blue, came next followed by VELVET GOWN, TYCOON, MOUNTAIN LAKE and CONGO DRUMS (what a yummy darkie). TYCOON, like ERIC, overdid its bloom, but in size this time. I would venture a guess (since I did not measure) that some of the flowers on a 5-year clump of TYCOON would measure as large as some of the TB's.

When I had about given up hope for MATANE, out came its delicate white blossoms in profusion. I must say, however, after SNOWCREST and WHITE SWIRL had put on their show, MATANE looked a little feeble by comparison and the foliage was very yellowish.

A tiny piece of MRS. PERRY put out one short bloomstalk, with a pinkish lavender flower which formed a seed pod before I noticed. And speaking of seed pods, believe me, between me and the bees, we didn't let a flower remain long without setting seed. The seed beds will be loaded this year with Siberians!

I saw CAESAR this year for the first time, and liked its velvety texture; I'm not sure whether I like his BROTHER better or not. Another year will tell.

I must say the months between Junes are very long and go so slowly! Waiting is so intense, but wait we will till my Siberian lovelies put on their best finery in '65. Wouldn't it be nice to win the Purple Section medal again for the Siberian section! Well, dream along with me.

* * *

ON SEEING THE INVISIBLE

Peggy Edwards

Have you had any occasion to visit any recent AIS Convention? Did you notice the magnificent displays of new Siberian introductions and choice new Siberian seedlings? You didn't? You're darn right you didn't. You saw a few, a very few.

Have you been to any Botanical Gardens lately, in Siberian season? Have you enjoyed the plantings? Of course not. They aren't there, or they are made up of the old, old varieties that even Botanical Gardens can afford to buy or can beg from gardeners discarding their surplus.

Why?

I'm not the only one asking this question. I have had several letters from Botanical Gardens and other public plantings of irises asking if I know of anyone who has surplus to share or of any hybridizer who has a couple of plants he would be willing to spare. As for Convention plantings - here is a letter Jake Scharff wrote Bryce Phenix in connection with Bryce's article in this issue. Jake gave me permission to quote from it:

"I am not answering your questionnaire due to the fact that we do not as yet have a Siberian Display Garden. However, I talked to Steve Varner at the Chicago Convention and he promised to send us ..(some).

"At present we have only seedlings, grown from seed sent us from England."

"Since the Siberians bloom with the Tall Bearded here, I know they would create interest among many people as we have from 5,000 to 10,000 people visit our Ketchum Memorial Iris Garden during the season. It is a public planting and except for the fertilizer, the cost to us is nothing as the City of Memphis Park Commission furnishes the labor to do our weeding."

"We are extremely sorry that we will not have large clumps to greet the eyes of our visitors next spring at the Annual Meeting to be held in Memphis. Bob Carney talked to several people last year and they proved to be ...uncooperative, which of course will result in a loss to the Siberian Society since we will be unable to display a fine bloom of Siberians." (Dated June 10, 1964)

In his letter to me giving permission to quote him, Mr. Scharff also said:

"...We have over 100 irises planted in the Median Display Garden and 42 Spurias planted in the Spuria Display Garden. These groups have given us their full support. ..(they) have cooperated beautifully with us. They want their new things seen by the some 20 judges we have in this area and more important want the public to become aware of the progress being made in their Sections."

"At each of the last several Annual Meetings I have buttonholed people in the Siberian Society and we were asked to have a Siberian Section in the Ketchum Memorial Iris Garden. I am sure that after the 1965 Annual Meeting in Memphis, your hybridizers will want to display their irises in this garden, after they find out first hand what an outstanding public garden it is." (Dated September 13, 1964)

This is perhaps more forcefully expressed than some comments but the basic facts are the same. Our hybridizers are not sending their new registrations to the convention gardens and they are not sending them to other places where they could be seen by Judges and the buying public. It is true that we don't as yet have a Display Garden system. But that is only one of the possible ways of bringing your new irises to the attention of Judges and buyers. And nobody but the introducer of a new variety is in any position to put these new varieties where they can be seen.

This is only one aspect of the problem of getting Siberians seen. All of us have some obligation to do what lies within our ability to put them before the gardening public. We may not be in a position to contribute the very newest ones to public plantings but all of us have some good, fairly recent varieties of which we could spare one small division. You may not know this, but very few Botanical Gardens have budgets adequate to buy all the plants they would like to display. Some have just enough money to maintain what they have. Mostly they obtain new plants by swapping with other Gardens, by growing from seed of species, and by gifts from interested gardeners.

So here is where you can help both the Society for Siberian Irises and the public planting near you. When you are planning to divide some of your better varieties of Siberians, write the nearest Botanical Garden or other public planting and ask them if they would be interested in surplus divisions - giving the names. They will in most cases be very happy to get them. In some plantings they will display a little notice telling who donated the plants. In most gardens they will be happy to send you seeds or cuttings of plants they have that are rare, unusual or hard to find on the market, by way of thanks. Incidentally if you have seed of Siberian species, they might be glad to have some of that too, as well as plants. (Naturally you aren't going to send them three small divisions of 50¢ plants and ask for seed worth \$10!)

One final note on how things tie in. In this issue we have one complaint about the high prices of Siberian introductions, another about the difficulty of getting plants to sell, and this article about the plants that aren't on display where they should be. These connect. Until there is a sufficient demand for Siberians at the commercial plantings it is not going to be worth the nurseryman's while to carry many Siberians at reasonable rates. If the nurseryman finds it difficult to obtain newer varieties in adequate quantity to sell them at low price, either he will have to start with a small division and propagate it - meaning that prices will be high to start with - or he will not be bothered to carry them. But if he is faced with a demand for them he will carry them. The only way a demand can arise is for the best varieties, new and old, to be put where prospective buyers can see them.

NOTES FROM THE GROWER TO THE CUSTOMER
Towne Abercrombie

So you want to grow Siberian irises in your garden? An excellent idea but do not expect your plants will compare favorably with the clumps you have seen in the commercial gardens or in the gardens of your friends for at least one or two years. One of the first requisites is patience. Remember that old saying, "Rome was not built in one day." So do not expect huge clumps with twelve to fifteen or more blooms in one year's time. There is a normal rate of reproduction with this plant, as with all others, which is under the control of Mother Nature and she will not be hurried. You can, however, render an able "assist" by proper planting and care.

First, choose the color or variety to fit into your own garden plan. If your garden consists of whites, such as white phlox, white astilbe, white peonies or white columbines do not select WHITE SWIRL, SNOW QUEEN, SNOW CREST or any other whites. None of these varieties will compliment any other white flower, in fact it may tend to subdue it entirely. Strive for contrast - not startling - but a contrast which will attract attention without discord. Try the gay PERRY'S BLUE or the more subdued COOL SPRING for contrast, or if you insist on something more striking with a bolder touch, try TYCOON, EMPEROR or CAESAR'S BROTHER. In short, try to temper your planting by leading up to the desired contrast, not forcing it upon the person viewing the garden for the first time.

The reverse of this would also be true. If the predominant color is red with deep red peonies, red poppies, red astilbe, red coral bells, etc., the white Siberian would add color and grace to the garden. The same theory would apply to a section which is planted predominantly to blues such as the gay blue columbines, corn flowers, etc. Try HELEN ASTOR or ERIC THE RED in this instance and see how they stand out in contrast to the other flowers. Not a clashing of color, but a subdued contrast which will be pleasing to the eye. Do a little experimenting with color. Try taking a number of pieces of colored paper or cardboard about six inches long and an inch or so wide and fasten them to a block so that they will stand upright. Move them about as you would a game of chess. If you stand six of the blocks, all white, in a grouping and then add a seventh block of white you will see at once that there is no contrast at all, just another white block. Now try a blue block and note how it stands out. Try this with the various colors and at once you can find just the right color to provide the accent which is desired.

The planning is finished but there is a right time and a wrong time to dig and replant the Siberians in your garden. They may be planted in the very early spring or in the late fall months, preferably the latter. We prefer digging and planting in early September so leave a designated spot open for your plants. Siberians do like lots of sunshine, although they will tolerate some shade, so do not choose a spot which will be fully shaded by other plants or shrubs which will rob them of their share of sun and food. Remember also that the Siberians like a rather acid soil and considerable amounts of moisture so do not plant them in ground which has been treated with lime or gypsum, or in

soil which is constantly dry. It may be necessary to treat your ground with a small amount of aluminum sulphate to make it somewhat acid for best results.

How big is a "clump"? Go with us into the garden at digging time. First, we partially fill a bucket with water and soil to make a muddy solution for the roots of the Siberians are fibrous and dry out quickly. We dig up a section of the desired variety and plunge it into the mud solution at once so that there will be no drying of the root system. Next we wash the entire plant under the hose until all dirt and foreign matter have been removed and then plunge it again into a bucket of clear water. The next step is the making of your clump which in reality is not a clump at all but consists of a number of small pieces, or fans. Sometimes there will be two or three fans, sometimes more, depending upon the size of the fans. We proceed to remove all old dead roots until we have only new, fresh, plump roots on the fan and then the foliage is cut back to about four inches in length. Next, we arrange the fans, according to size, and form the clump. The roots are then wrapped in moist moss, placed in a cellophane bag and sealed and the clump is ready, either to take home and plant or to be shipped across the country.

You now have your Siberian iris and are ready to plant it. Loosen the soil and, if extremely hard, add some sand or peat moss to provide a certain amount of aeration. Use either bone meal or dried cow manure as a fertilizer, just a good handful to a plant. Blood meal is also good to use if available. Mix the fertilizer into the soil and plant your several fans, either as a "clump" or separately as you prefer. Cover with about an inch of soil above the root system, firm well and water thoroughly. Keep the plants moist until well established. In late fall provide a mulch of some material which will not form a soggy mat during the winter months. Straw, coarse hay, pine needles, excelsior are all good materials to use. Do not use leaves.

It is spring now and you should remove the mulch and cut, not tear, the old dead leaves away. Soon your plant will start new growth and you can take your little daily inspection trips through the garden and watch the new leaves stretch up to the sun. One day you will notice what seems to be an enlargement of the leaves and in a few days, lo and behold, a nice fat bud and shortly a beautiful, graceful flower waving in the breeze. That is the reward for your patience and for your "assist" to Mother Nature. After the blooms are spent cut off the bud stalk or seed pods. You will still have a nice graceful plant in your garden which will multiply rapidly and next year you will have a much larger plant and many more blooms. By that time you will want to add other varieties of varying colors for accent in other parts of your garden. You are experienced now in the growing of Siberian irises and you will not need all of this help, or will you? We have grown them for years and we still need help and we learn something new each year. Do come back and see us next year at Abercrombie's Iris Gardens, 7731 Livingston Rd. Cincinnati 39, Ohio.

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A COMMENT ON PRICES OF NEW INTRODUCTIONS
Bryce Phenix

It would be foolish to attempt to enumerate the many qualities of Siberian irises. Just about all irisarians will agree to the many obvious qualities, but unfortunately all irisarians don't grow Siberians.

I have often wondered, if we have a plant that so many people think is outstanding, why then are these people not growing Siberians?

There seems to be two reasons: Ignorance of culture, making people think growing Siberians is an impossible task, and price. The first reason can be solved by education; however, the latter requires education among ourselves. Before I continue, I would like to make one basic premise upon which my discussion revolves: Most iris collections are principally made up of tall bearded varieties, with many growers adding, by purchase, several newer irises to their collection each year.

It would be desirable to have many of these people, along with their purchases, buy some Siberians each year. This would occur, after proper education, if people were not frightened away by price. Undoubtedly prices in Siberians, equalling tall bearded prices, are based upon the desire of the growers to attempt to cover costs, and this is understandable and reasonable; nevertheless, I can not help but feel that this is self defeating in the end result. At a lower price, most likely, more plants would be sold to people who then would feel they could buy Siberians without hurting their collection of tall.

In stating this opinion to several friends I was greeted with the response: "But people won't buy an iris that isn't expensive." I think the fallacy of this statement is obvious. Price can not make quality. In more practical terms and using an example, for a moment look at the Median Society. With each issue of the Medianite, the list of members swells with new enthusiastic members. The society is flourishing. If we were to consider the argument that an iris has to be expensive to sell, the Median Society should be near dead, for most Median introductions are introduced at very reasonable prices. The Median Society isn't dead, median hybridizers continue to introduce their fine seedlings at low prices, and this society grows daily.

My point is two fold: A high price is self defeating. It discourages people from making purchases. A reasonable price, contrary to the popular myth, can stimulate interest; the grower will benefit, and will sell many more plants and be more likely to cover costs. Education and lower prices, coupled with an efficient Display-Test garden system for Siberians, there should be shortly a tremendous increase in interest in Siberians. In the final result, we will gain by having more people grow Siberians and will gain new enthusiastic members.

(Editor's note: Opinions please!)

EXCERPTS FROM ROBINS

HYBRIDIZER'S ROBIN - Siberian #2 Margaret Dunbar, Director

No report on crosses--what pollen takes on what, etc., but many high hopes. Sarah Tiffney has just joined this robin and her experiences will add a great deal.

Gale Whitsett; 70 Garner Avenue, Newark, Ohio, reports that in a group of Japs he received by mistake a Siberian which proved to be a real dwarf--only nine inches high. Those interested in low growing Siberians will want to make use of this lovely blue.

Joseph Gatty, 5-22 Hazel Place, Fairlawn, New Jersey, reports that he has ten thousand seedlings of WHITE SWIRL which should bloom this year. It sounds as though we would get some idea about White Swirl as a parent.

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ARRANGERS' ROBIN - Siberian #4 Mildred Johnson, Director

The members for the most part have concentrated on drying flowers for winter decor. Many use painted Siberian seed pods with other materials such as dried flower heads of sedum spectabile and Devil's Claw.

Ginny Burton, Box 352--R. #2, Route 12, South, Greene, New York, says: "I have used dried Siberian seed pods in corsages--take the stem from the pod, drill four tiny holes at the base, thread two wires through these holes and twist to form a stem. Cover with florist tape in the color desired. Silver and gold painted pods make lovely Christmas corsages."

Dot Aldrich, Box 127, Norwich, New York, finds: "After drying flowers for twenty years using every method and every flower, I always go back to cornmeal and borax as a mixture in which I can place the flower and forget it until I am ready to use it."

Also: "I have dried Siberians successfully but have had some trouble with the flower drooping if there is any degree of humidity."

Mildred Johnson, 2275 Kensington, Salt Lake City, Utah, the director of the Robin comments: "When I find a humid spell coming, I stuff small wads of pliofilm (handi-wrap) inside the standards. I tried cotton balls once but found they stuck to the petals when being removed on a less humid day. This works perfectly".

Margaret Taylor, Tribune, Kansas, reports: "I use Siberian foliage all summer long in arrangements of many types of flowers."

(Editor's note: Have you tried to preserve Siberian foliage by using glycerin and water? Leaves remain more pliable for shaping and are easier to work with in arrangements.)

Fred Cassebeer, West Nyack, New York, reports a good winter - used salt hay to mulch with. Had a little trouble with moles (or mice) in a hot bed--suggest he try using a few mothballs to discourage these little pests. (If droopy foliage is allowed to stay on the plants during the winter, mice are encouraged to live and work on the roots of the Siberians. So some trimming should be done to avoid this.)

Steve Varner, Monticello, Illinois, concerning foliage habits of Siberians: 'The floppy foliage is more noticeable here in late summer and early fall when conditions are hot and dry. The ones with erect foliage never look as bad as those that flop and do not recover.'

Dorothy Spofford, Beverly Farms, Massachusetts, discussing seed planting: "In the fall of '62 I planted all my crosses in coffee cans. Unfortunately after putting them out in the ground, I realized that I had neglected to make drainage holes. To remedy this an ice pick was used to punch holes in the bottoms of the cans. Come spring I noticed that certain cans were very water-logged. I felt of the bottom and sure enough no drainage holes. As expected they never germinated but being busy and having other things to do I never dumped them out. They even stayed out all last winter and finally when I was about to heave them I noticed that in the mud were some nice green shoots of iris showing up. Now did I read the instructions wrong to the effect that they would have rotted under such circumstances or what was the reason that they were still full of life? I must have over 50 seedlings in those cans and even better germination than I ever got from the well drained ones."

Re: saving pollen---"At the moment I am taking pollen, drying it, placing the dried anthers in gelatin capsules and refrigerating. I prepare a disc of styrofoam which just fits in the bottom of a peanut jar I use to keep the pollen capsules. I put a table-spoon of Flower-Dri in the bottom, place the styrofoam disc and then fill up with capsules, all numbered of course. I usually have a list of what is what in the jar and also in a card file--this makes it possible to prepare new capsules without continuous opening and reopening the jar."

..."I find weather does affect takes. Damp rainy days during bloom season does bother--dry windy days can dry the stigma lip so that it won't accept pollen even though it does prevent too much bee action. I usually take a bud which is just puffed up to blossom, gather my pollen a day in advance. I dismantle the bud and apply pollen immediately."

Maurice Kitton, Kent, England reports: 'The season was a bad one with high winds, thunderstorms and lots of rain and even if I had had the time I doubt whether I could have done any hybridizing. However, I left the blooms and there is quite a bit of self set seed. I have gathered this and in the next few days hope to send some to each of you. It is from the best of the coloured 40 chromo-

some plants and with any luck should produce some interesting seedlings."

May we of the International Robin who received the seed express our thanks for your thoughtfulness and generosity, Mr. Kitton.

Lucy Delany, Nelson, New Zealand, reports from her country--date of October 1st, It will be a few weeks before the Siberians will flower. Some of her first seedlings are a Mirza seedling - navy blue, selfed and a Delavayii seedling, selfed. It is now the dwarf bearded season and last year's seedlings are a mass of bloom. The Sibiricas bloom in New Zealand about the end of October and the beginning of November.

Lucy has been corresponding with our newest member from New Zealand, Mrs. P. M. Kokick, Northland, N.Z., who reports she cannot grow bearded irises successfully as their land is kauri gum country-heavy clay type - but Japs, Spurias and Sibiricas do well. Lucy states there is increased interest in Sibiricas-as a request for information and articles from the president of the N. Z. Iris Society, Mrs. White, proves. So if anyone would like to send an article for their bulletin, be sure to do so. They would welcome it we are sure. If they have questions I know we will all be glad to have them sent to us. Right?

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A WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

It is always a pleasure to welcome new members to our Society and especially so when they are representatives from other countries. Therefore we are glad to have the following join us:

British Iris Society
R. Usher, Hon. Literature Secretary
78 Wilmot Way, Banstead
Surrey, England

Mr. Usher has also consented to become a Corresponding Member so we will be hearing from him from time to time.

A. Horinaka
17 Kitamomodani
Minami - KV
Osaka, Japan

Mrs. P. M. Kokick
"Flowerville, Kokopu
R. D. 9
Whangarei, Northland
New Zealand

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